



Chris Danou's Capitol Report

Assembly Passes HOPE Agenda to Combat Heroin and Opiate Addiction

State laws are written to address the issues facing our state, and lawmakers have a responsibility to make sure our laws reflect the will of the people as well as the will of the times. Many laws are written in a way that are proactive, but we also write laws that are a reaction to things happening in our state.

While some state laws might be more monumental than others, such as laws that founded the University of Wisconsin, allowed women to vote, prohibited child labor and changed the voting age to eighteen, each law is important in its own way in addressing issues facing our community, region and state. When an issue does arise, lawmakers must not only be aware of it, but they must also have an understanding of everything that makes up that particular issue and why a change in the law is needed.

In recent years, communities across Wisconsin that are urban, rural and suburban have dealt with the negative and harmful consequences of heroin and opiate abuse. These substances have become more readily available and they have caused serious problems for individuals, as well as their families, law enforcement and communities at large. Lawmakers became aware of these issues and worked in a bipartisan fashion to help curb heroin and opiate abuse in Wisconsin.

Last week, the State Assembly passed bills that will help combat this public health crisis under the HOPE (Heroin, Opiate Prevention and Education) Agenda. This legislative package includes four bills that address the many issues that surround heroin and opiate abuse that range from practitioner reviewing requirements to law enforcement officer involvement, as well as clinic certification and reporting by treatment clinics.

The HOPE bills are Assembly Bill 364, 365, 366 and 367, all of which were co-sponsored by lawmakers on both sides of the aisle from across the state. Specifically, AB 364 relates to reporting, disclosure, and practitioner review requirements under the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program, provides an exemption from emergency rule procedures, and grants necessary rule-making authority. AB 365 relates to the duty of law enforcement officers to report to the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program controlled-substance violations, opioid-related drug overdoses or deaths, and reports of stolen prescription drugs. AB 366 relates to pain clinic certification and requirements, grants rule-making authority and provides a penalty. AB 367 relates to reporting by treatment programs using methadone and requiring review of prescription drug monitoring database. These four bills address the four overlapping areas regarding heroin or opiate abuse, and are very thoughtful in addressing the problem while putting common-sense solutions on the books.

While we're realistic to know these laws will not stop all heroin and opiate abuse, we're optimistic that these laws responsibly address the many specific issues that makeup this complex issue in a way to truly help combat the problem. The HOPE Agenda is an excellent example of lawmakers from both sides of the aisle coming together to address an issue facing in communities across our state, and I believe it will help people in urban, rural and suburban areas struggling with heroin and opiate addiction.